

Military Retirees May Be Eligible for Important Compensation Program

Applying for the Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) program can provide security for retired Service members. Just ask CRSC Army Ambassadors, Colonel Bob Elliott (retired), First Sergeant David Cole (retired), Sergeant First Class Clint Meshew (retired), Lieutenant Colonel James Parker (retired) or Captain Joe Crawford (retired), as they applied and joined more than 75,000 Army retirees who are receiving additional monthly compensation for their combat-related injuries.

The Service members interviewed for this article are CRSC recipients and so passionate about the program that they have volunteered to help educate other eligible veterans and assist them in the claim process. One of the best things anyone can do for a Veteran is to tell them about CRSC. Even if they are not eligible, someone they know could be. CRSC has begun to build the Ambassador's Program, a grassroots outreach campaign that is focused on recruiting help from passionate Veterans.

CRSC recipients and other passionate Veterans or Veterans Service Organizations (VSO's) can sign up to become official Ambassadors and help spread the word. And, CRSC makes it easy by providing downloadable tool kits on the CRSC website with vital CRSC information including an information document, frequently asked questions, talking points, video and slide presentations and much more. It has been amazing how the word spreads.

Background:

CRSC was enacted by Congress on December 2, 2002. The program provides compensation for eligible military retirees with combat-related injuries. The Army CRSC program is operated by the Army Human Resources Command (AHRC) under the direction of the United States Army Physical Disability Agency. CRSC provides dual compensation for eligible military retirees with combat-related injuries. This benefit provides a monthly tax-free compensation (full concurrent receipt option) that supplements Veterans Administration (VA) disability and military retired payments.

The Service members interviewed for this article learned about CRSC through articles in *Army Echoes* or from one of the many in-person briefings Colonel John F. Sackett delivers to retirees across the country. Colonel Sackett is the Chief of the Army CRSC Division and is based in Alexandria, VA.

What are Army veterans saying about CRSC?

When retirees are asked why did you apply? There is a common answer,

"I risked my life for our country. That is what happens when we go to war, and even in peacetime you receive combat training. If you get injured in either, you are entitled to a just compensation,"
replies Colonel Elliot.

Captain Crawford tells us that he "served faithfully for 22 years, got injured and felt like he was being recognized by our country in receiving CRSC payments."

Most of the Service members interviewed served in Vietnam and were either injured or exposed to Agent Orange; however, retirees with other combat-related injuries from many wars and training are also recipients of CRSC. Just like the other 75,000 Army CRSC recipients, their supplemental payment was completely tax-free and paid retroactively, in most cases. They also received their CRSC payments easily through electronic deposit into their bank accounts.

First Sergeant David Cole remarks, “this replaces the money the VA took out of my retired pay.” “Not only is the money good and necessary, but I’ve enjoyed working with the CRSC staff as they are always helpful and courteous, and that is very important to me.”

First Sergeant Cole, Captain Crawford and many other veterans all do their part to spread the word about CRSC to potentially deserving retirees. First Sergeant Cole does not want money for his time, and Captain Crawford does not want reimbursements for his gas expenses making trips to tell other Service members about CRSC. What they both want in return is a promise from each veteran to pass CRSC information onto other veterans. These two veterans meet with other retirees to assist with their claim form submissions. This includes filling out the claim form, collecting personal and medical documents, and putting the entire package together to mail to the CRSC headquarters. Afterwards, they provide the claimant with CRSC promotional materials so they too, can do their part and continue spreading the word.

For the past two years Captain Crawford has sought out and sent 50 qualified veterans to the CRSC program. He has become known in his Seaside, Calif. community as a CRSC advocate and now has veterans coming to him through word of mouth. He helps other retirees on a volunteer basis and spends five or six hours a day spreading the word and helping his fellow veterans. “I’ve really seen the impact that this program has had on veterans, not only receiving the money, but also the recognition has really changed their lives.”

Captain Crawford tells us that it is easy to apply for CRSC. Veterans call the CRSC Call Center to find out if they are eligible. Then, they fill out the claim form and obtain the appropriate medical records and personnel documentation. Lastly, they send the claim into CRSC and, as SFC Meshew remarked, “each month the money just shows up.” The entire adjudication and pay process on average takes less than three months (after submitting your claim packet).

More than 238,000 retired Soldiers are eligible for the CRSC program. Retirees meeting the requirements are encouraged to apply for the program through their respective branch of Service. Eligible retirees include those who, 1) are Active, Reserve or medically retired with at least 20 years of service, 2) are receiving retired pay, 3) have retired pay offset by VA payments, and 4) have a 10% or greater VA rated disability.

In addition, eligible retirees must have combat-related injuries (with documented proof) that were incurred in the performance of duty under conditions simulating war (e.g. named exercises, field training), while engaged in hazardous service (e.g. flight, diving, parachute duty), through an instrumentality of war (e.g. combat vehicles, weapons, Agent Orange), or as a direct result of armed conflict.

Join the ranks with Colonel Bob Elliott, First Sergeant David Cole, Sergeant First Class Clint Meshew, Lieutenant Colonel James Parker and Captain Joe Crawford and apply for CRSC today by contacting the Service that you retired from. Would you like to become an Army CRSC Ambassador? Visit www.crsc.army.mil or call 1-866-281-3254.

AIR FORCE

United States Air Force
Disability Division (CRSC)
550 C Street West Ste 6
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4708
1-800-616-3775
www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/disability/CRSC/CRSCnew.htm

ARMY

Department of the Army
U.S. Army Physical Disabilities Agency/
Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC)
200 Stovall Street
Alexandria, VA 22332
Phone: 1-866-281-3254
Email: CRSC.info@us.army.mil
Website: www.CRSC.army.mil

COAST GUARD

Commander (adm-1-CRSC)
U.S. Coast Guard
Personnel Command
4200 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22203-1804

MARINE CORPS

Secretary of the Navy Council of Review Boards
Attn: Combat-Related Special Compensation Branch
720 Kennon Street SE, Suite 309
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374
1-877-366-2772
www.hq.navy.mil/ncpb/CRSCB/combatrelated.htm

NAVY

Secretary of the Navy Council of Review Boards
Attn: Combat-Related Special Compensation Branch
720 Kennon Street SE, Suite 309
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374
1-877-366-2772
www.hq.navy.mil/ncpb/CRSCB/combatrelated.htm

NOAA CORPS

Director, Commissioned Personnel Center
SSMC3/Room 12100
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

United States Public Health Service
Division of Commissioned Personnel
Office of the Director, Room 4A-15
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857-0001